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SUBJECT: "THE ANGOLAN" ELECTORAL NEWS BULLETIN, VOL. II

- ¶1. (U) In This Issue:
- Reaction to Convocation of Election
 - In-Fighting Threatens PRS and FNLA Campaigns
 - UNITA Concerned by Acts of Political Intolerance
 - EU Plans Electoral Observation Mission

Stakeholders React to Convocation of Elections

¶2. (U) Political parties, media outlets, election network groups, religious entities and civil society organizations universally lauded President Dos Santos' June 4th convocation of legislative elections for September 5, 2008. Independent newspaper A Capital declared "Alleluia!" on its front cover, and Radio National conducted a series of interviews in which political party leaders praised the President for marking that date on which Angolans will return to the polls for the first time in 16 years.

¶3. (U) Some parties, however, expressed concern over alterations to the electoral law proposed by the Council of the Republic and mentioned in the presidential decree convoking elections. The electoral law currently allows electoral official to conduct new elections at specific voting stations within eight days of the general election if a) voting is disrupted at the station for more than 3 hours, b) public unrest or disturbance in the area causes authorities to shut down the voting station to protect public safety, or c) other factors affect the station's ability to open. The Council of the Republic and President Dos Santos also advised the National Assembly to examine expanding the list of possible triggers for a re-vote as a safeguard against potential logistic glitches on Election Day.

¶4. (SBU) UNITA expressed concern that expansion of this clause could open the door for electoral fraud by allowing the ruling MPLA to manipulate results through holding new elections at voting stations in key areas. PRD also expressed concern that last-minute changes to the electoral law could threaten the credibility of the elections among key stakeholders, who may interpret changes as a means for results tampering and fraud. The MPLA, however, dismissed the criticism, and defended the proposed changes as a way to ensure that all voters have their day at the polls, should unforeseen circumstances affect voting in remote areas.

In-Fighting Threatens PRS and FNLA Campaigns

¶5. (SBU) Internal crises raging within the PRS and FNLA, Angola's third and fourth-largest political parties, respectively, have threatened the parties electoral ambitions. The crisis may prevent the parties from participating in elections due to legal requirements that bar parties with contested leadership. The

Supreme Court has cautioned both the PRA and FNLA of the possibility they may be barred from elections unless these internal issues are resolved.

¶6. (SBU) The Social Renovation Party (PRS), which dominated the Lundas and Moxico in the '92 elections and currently holds 6 seats in parliament, may be barred from running in September's contest due to contested party leadership. Though the leadership battle dates back to 2000, resolution has been complicated by the recent expulsion of a group of senior party leaders who had been working towards reconciliation. While the factions trade accusations of corruption, mismanagement and betrayal and party president Eduardo Kuangana has declined to host a reconciliatory meeting, little is being done to resolve the pending court case contesting Kuangana's election as party president. The GRA, through the Anti-Corruption Court, has frozen PRS bank accounts and ordered auditors to investigate accusations of financial mismanagement against the party president.

¶7. (SBU) The FNLA (Angola National Liberation Front) has similar troubles, as its two factions continue to refuse reconcile entreaties, and argue that the other faction cease and desist. Ngola Kabangu, the appointed heir of the late party founder Holden Roberto, has admitted that it will be disastrous for his party to forgo September's elections over a claim to the party leadership by former FNLA political secretary Lucas Ngonda, but efforts to reconcile the party by religious leaders such as Catholic Bishop Dom Kahango and Anglican leader Reverend Ntoni Nzinga have thus far been unsuccessful.

UNITA Concerned by Acts of Political Intolerance

¶8. (SBU) UNITA's leadership discussed concern about increasing acts of political intolerance with embassy officials on May 19. General Chitombi, the senior UNITA official for ex-combatants, told us the party has received "many" reports of intolerance, including two February incidents in Bie province, one in which houses belonging to UNITA members were set ablaze by MPLA supporters and on attack in which a female UNITA supporter's hand was chopped off. He also discussed a March incident in Mungo, Huambo province, in which he stated UNITA supporters were attacked by MPLA supporters retaliating to UNITA's defiance to the MPLA's order barring public UNITA rallies in Mungo. UNITA held a rally on March 1, and the next day groups of young men went from house to house beating up UNITA leaders in Mungo and ripping down UNITA flags. Chitombi stated that these incidents have been brought to the attention of authorities, but no action has been taken. Angolan Interior Minister Roberto Leal Monteiro has stated that incidents such as these should be considered acts of vandalism rather than political intolerance.

¶9. (SBU) In a prescient statement, Chitombi expressed hope that the situation would not escalate to the point at which UNITA militants are forced to take the law into their hands. On May 20, Radio Ecclesia reported that 15 persons were wounded after UNITA militants reacted to what they called provocation from MPLA militants in Sabchimemuna commune, Bie province. UNITA militants accused the MPLA of stealing their party flag from its mast, and their attempt to retrieve the flag led to a street fight in which knives and cutlasses were freely used.

EU Plans Electoral Observation Mission

¶10. (SBU) The EU completed its electoral observation exploratory mission to Angola on May 30. According to EU insiders, the mission's recommendations call for 120 observers, with the first long-term observers arriving in-country on July 15th. While in Angola, mission leaders told the Embassy it plans to deploy long and short-term observers to all 18 provinces, but were still examining the security and logistical reality of doing so.
FERNANDEZ